

Floreen leaves content

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ROCKVILLE — A six-year fiscal spending plan requiring annual contributions to the county's special reserve to increase gradually by 4 percent represents the Montgomery County Council's best decision this year, Council President Nancy Floreen said Tuesday at a press conference highlighting her accomplishments. Floreen, whose term officially ends Dec. 6, presided over the county's 16th council.

During the event, Floreen stressed the council's ability to function despite an "onslaught of incredible challenges."

"When you stop and think about it, I am hard-pressed to think of any other council that has worked through the experiences we have had and at the same time were so successful on their substantive initiatives," Floreen said.

She recounted the challenges she has faced since taking office her office in 2006, including the death of Council members Marilyn Praisner and Don Praisner in 2009, the heavy snow storms earlier this year and budget challenges.

"The top story for the last four years in Montgomery County is the economy," Floreen said, referring to 2011's massive budget shortfall of \$1 billion and contention within the council during the months preceding that budget's approval. "They say a 500 pound gorilla sleeps wherever it wants, but we've taken serious action to try to tame this beast."

The six-year fiscal plan, which Floreen introduced in June, was one measure the council took in response to budget woes. The idea was first recommended as part of the county's charter almost 40 years ago but was never adopted. The plan was adopted in July, though it does not stipulate that future county councils must include the plan in their budget processes.

"The recession has given us the opportunity to reexamine our priorities and to strengthen our policies," Floreen said.

She was elected to county council in 2002 and has chaired the council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Environment and Energy Committee and served on the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee. In 1986, Floreen was appointed a commissioner on the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, where she served until 1994.

"Particularly in the area of transportation, we made decisions that will last for generations — we opened the Montrose Parkway, and we'll soon celebrate the opening of the Intercounty Connector," Floreen said.

The first part of the \$487 million six-lane highway project will likely open in December. Under Floreen's commitment to improve transportation and public safety, the county also adopted speed cameras — 60 on permanent sites and 59 on mobile units.

"Even though the cameras are the butt of a lot of jokes, they have significantly reduced both speed and accidents," Floreen said.

The speed cameras also proved lucrative for the county, garnering more than \$47 million in revenue since 2007.

“While we faced quite an onslaught of incredible challenges, we have truly shaped the future of Montgomery County with a tremendous list of accomplishments,” Floreen said.